## Fly Rod Guide Sizing

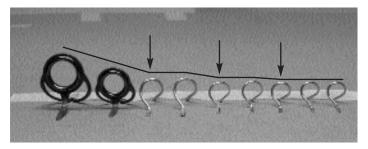
Using fewer sizes results in better line flow and quicker rod response.

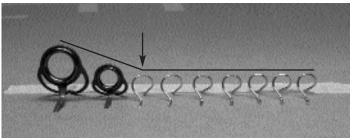
In the past two issues, we discussed guide sizing for casting and spinning rods. Now let's turn to fly rods. Just as with the previous two, there is simply nothing to be gained by using every size guide offered by the manufacturers. Using what would seem to be progressive sizes and quantities of each size offered does not help line flow nor allow the straightest and best line path. In fact, quite the contrary is often true. However, kicking out many of the intermediate sizes and quickly reducing to the smallest size that will pass your largest expected lines and connections, you end up with a guide set up that is lighter and actually provides a straighter line path.

For those who prefer ceramics on their fly rods, the same principle applies - skip all the intermediate sizes and drop quickly to the smallest guide you plan to use. Then, use as many of them as you need all the way to the tip of the rod. So a good set up in all ceramics might look like this: 12-8-6-6-6-6-6-6-6-6-6-6 tip top. Inserting other sizes, such as a 10 and some number of size 7's, does nothing other than add extra weight and create a less straight line path.

The trick is to determine the smallest guides you'll be able to use and then quickly drop to that size and stay there. You should be able to do this by the 3rd or at least the 4th guide. This will hold true regardless of whether you choose snakes, single foot wire, or ceramic guides.

Now how do you know just how small you can go with your guide sizes? The smallest guide size used on your rod must be able to easily pass any line, leader, knot or connec





Regardless of whether you view the guides head on or in line with each other as they would be on the rod, using multiple sizes (top) results in a stair-step line path. Conversly, using just three sizes (bottom), with all the same sized running guides, results in a mostly straight line path. Note the number of course changes in each.

tion that you require to pass through them. Most of the time, this is best determined by simple trial and error. Tape up a set and see how it casts. Then tape up another set with smaller guides and see if it casts and passes your line and any connections as well as before. If so, keep going. If not, stop, and perhaps move the other way to larger guides. When you find the smallest size that still offers smoothness and ease in casting your line and passing any required connections, you're done. Remember, fly lines are fairly small in diamater - it's usually the connections such as knots and loop-to-loops that require more room.

Now for the butt or stripping guide size. For beginners use the following rule of thumb - for rods in the 6-weight and under category, use either a low frame #12 or a high frame (spinning type) #10. For rods in the 7-weight to 9-weight category, use a low frame #16 or a high frame #12. For rods of 10-weight and above, use a ring size of #16 in either frame style. Experiment with larger sizes if you wish, but stop as soon as a larger size no longer improves your casting distance.